

How to Discuss **How To Be Black** *with Your Students*

Although Baratunde Thurston's **How To Be Black** is very funny,

the book grapples with important issues about race, bigotry, and discrimination—topics that are often difficult to discuss in a class-

room. We hope these strategies will help you have meaningful and enriching conversations with your students. We've also included guidelines that can be handed out to your students.

1. **Establish** goals for each session that tie to the curriculum. This will help focus and structure the discussion. Be sure to share the goals with the students at the beginning of each class.
2. **Consider** your biases and views. Every person has biases and viewpoints based on one's experiences, environment, and upbringing. Know what yours are and keep those in mind as you are leading the discussions. If you had any moments in life that led you to view a bias differently or change a perception you have held, sharing that with students is an excellent way to model what you are trying to accomplish for students.
3. **Set** ground rules. This can be done together as a class or by you as the instructor. These include: no name calling, listening respectfully, avoiding hurtful words or labels, disagreeing with the idea without attacking the person, asking for clarification when uncertain, dealing with inaccurate information, keeping all classroom discussions private by not sharing outside of class, and allowing students to have the right to state if they feel their thoughts are being taken too lightly.
4. **Build** a sense of community early in the year. It is important to get to know your students right away. Know their names, their backgrounds, and their current situation. Several icebreaker activities could be used to do this.
5. **Value** every student. Every student brings something valuable to the class. Let students know they are important, and so are their ideas.



While people may not agree with all of the ideas discussed, it is important for every student to be valued. Also, students need to know they are safe in presenting their views.

6. **Be involved** as the leader. As the facilitator, you need to be an active participant in the discussions. This also means you need to enforce the rules that were established. Be prepared to act if a tense moment arises. Summarize the class events and activities at the end of each class.
7. **Be prepared** to handle heated situations. These may occur, and how you handle them may be critical to the success of future discussions. Have a plan ready if these occur. This may mean a need to stop the discussion, have students take a period to cool off, meeting individually with a student, having a small group share the concern, or even ending discussion for the class and meeting later with those involved individually or as a small group.
8. **Follow up** with students individually if necessary. If there are tense moments, or if a student is uninvolved, meet with them to see what can be done to improve the situation.

“A hilarious look at the complexities of contemporary racial politics and personal identity.” —*Booklist*

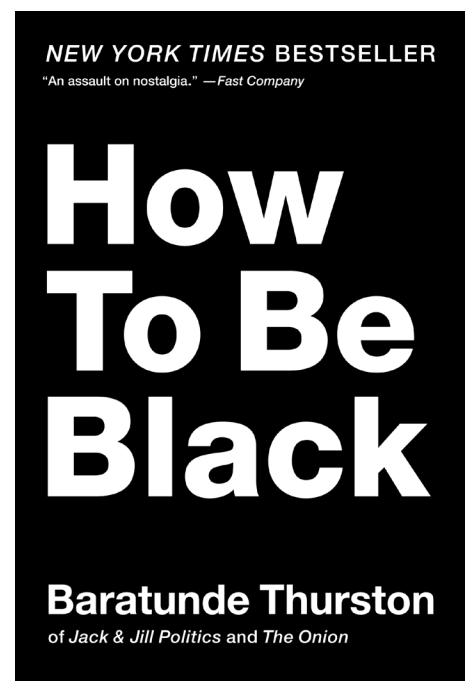
“A hilarious blend of razor-sharp satire and memoir...Using his own story and humor, Thurston demonstrates that the best way to ‘be’ anything is to simply be yourself.” —*Publishers Weekly*



Baratunde Thurston is a comedian, digital advisor, and globetrotting speaker.

He cofounded *Jack & Jill Politics*, was named one of the 100 most influential African-Americans by *The Root* and one of the 100 most creative people in business by *Fast Company*. Formerly of *The Onion*, Baratunde is now the founder of *Cultivated Wit*. He resides in Brooklyn, and lives on Twitter (@baratunde). You can visit him at www.Baratunde.com.

9. **Review** for the students at the end of each session. Summarize what you perceive occurred, what the goals were, and if those goals were accomplished. You may ask students to do the same before you give your summary.
10. **Reflect** after each session. Consider if you accomplished your goals. Were you involved in the discussion? How did you handle any difficult moments? Were the ground rules followed? After each session, assess how things went and tweak as needed. You may want students to do the same at the end of the activity. This should be done in a written format. Do your reflection before reading the reflections of the students. After reading students reflections, you may want to revise your reflections again.



How To Be Black is available in paperback, ebook, and digital audio editions.

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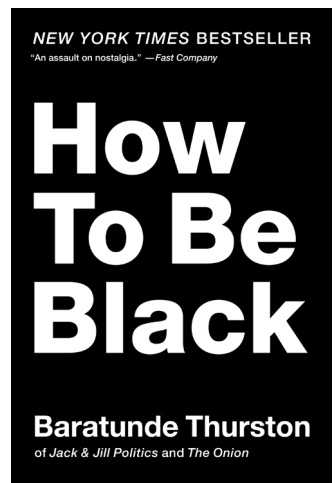
Get Ready to Discuss

How To Be Black

Although Baratunde Thurston's **How To Be Black** is very funny, the book grapples with important issues about race, bigotry, and discrimination—topics that are often difficult to discuss. Here are some guidelines that will help you have meaningful discussions with your classmates when you talk about **How To Be Black**.

1. Personal attacks and name-calling are prohibited.
2. Allow the person speaking to finish his/her points or statements.
3. It is acceptable to ask for clarification of statements made.
4. Confidentiality must be maintained at all times.
5. Students should voice their concerns if they believe their statements aren't being taken seriously or respectfully.
6. Students should speak from their perspective.
7. It isn't necessary for everybody to agree. The goal is to gain an understanding of the perspectives of others by listening carefully to what each student is sharing about his or her experiences going through life.
8. Be cautious in your choice of words. Avoid words that are likely to anger or stereotype a person.
9. It is acceptable to take a time out to cool off if necessary. If needed, ask the facilitator for a class time out to sort out events or comments that are causing conflict.
10. It is acceptable to meet with the teacher individually or in a small group to clarify issues that are of concern to you.
11. All students should agree to take an active role in every class discussion.
12. Try to learn as much as you can from each class session and class discussion.

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